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Viewing cable 09MEXICO3573, MEXICAN NAVY OPERATION NETS DRUG KINGPIN ARTURO

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Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
09MEXICO3573	2009-12-17 20:42	2011-08-30 01:44	SECRET	Embassy Mexico

Appears in these articles:

<http://wikileaks.jornada.com.mx/notas/bogota-amenazo-con-cancelar-capacitacion-a-mexicanos-por-corruptos>

VZCZCXRO9531
RR RUEHCD RUEHGD RUEHHC RUEHMC RUEHNG RUEHNL RUEHRD RUEHRS RUEHTM
DE RUEHME #3573/01 3512042
ZNY SSSSS ZZH
R 172042Z DEC 09
FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 9478
INFO RUEHXC/ALL US CONSULATES IN MEXICO COLLECTIVE
RHMFISS/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHINGTON DC
RUEHC/DEPT OF LABOR WASHINGTON DC
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC
RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHINGTON DC
RHMFISS/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL
RHMFISS/HQS USNORTHCOM
RUEAHLA/DEPT OF HOMELAND SECURITY
RUEABND/DEA HQS WASHINGTON DC
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHINGTON DC

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 MEXICO 003573

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/24/2019

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SUBJECT: MEXICAN NAVY OPERATION NETS DRUG KINGPIN ARTURO

BELTRAN LEYVA

REF: MONTERREY 000453

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Gustavo Delgado.
Reason: 1.4 (b),(d).

¶1. (S) Summary. Mexican Navy forces acting on U.S. information killed Arturo Beltran Leyva in an operation on December 16, the highest-level takedown of a cartel figure under the Calderon administration. The operation is a clear victory for the Mexican Government and an example of excellent USG-GOM cooperation. The unit that conducted the operation had recieved extensive U.S. training. Arturo Beltran Leyva's death will not solve Mexico's drug problem, but it will hopefully generate the momentum necessary to make sustained progress against other drug trafficking organizations. End Summary.

The Operation

¶2. (S) Mexican Navy (SEMAR) sources revealed on the night of December 17 that SEMAR forces killed Arturo Beltran Leyva (ABL), head of the Beltran Leyva Organization, during a shoot-out in Cuernavaca (approximately 50 miles south of Mexico City) that afternoon. At least three other cartel operatives were killed during the raid, with a fourth committing suicide. While it still has not been confirmed, Embassy officials believe the latter to be ABL's brother, Hector, which would mean that all Beltran Leyva brothers are either dead or in prison. Arturo Beltran Leyva has a long history of involvement in the Mexican drug trade, and worked with Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman and his Sinaloa Cartel before splitting in 2008. The rivalry between the Sinaloa and Beltran Leyva organizations has been a key factor driving the escalating levels of narcotics-related violence in recent years. Born in Sinaloa, ABL has been key to the importation and distribution of cocaine and heroin in the United States, and also has extensive money laundering capabilities, corruption networks, and international contacts in Colombia and the U.S.

¶3. (C) Embassy law enforcement officials say that the arrest operation targeting ABL began about a week prior to his death when the Embassy relayed detailed information on his location to SEMAR. The SEMAR unit has been trained extensively by NORTHCOM over the past several years. SEMAR raided an identified location, where they killed several ABL bodyguards and arrested over 23 associates, while ABL and Hector escaped. On Monday, the Embassy interagency linked ABL to an apartment building located in Cuernavaca (about an hour south of Mexico City), where ABL was in hiding. SEMAR initiated an arrest operation on Wednesday afternoon, surrounding the identified apartment complex, and establishing a security perimeter. ABL's forces fired on the SEMAR operatives and engaged in a sustained firefight that wounded three SEMAR marines and possibly killed one. SEMAR forces evacuated residents of the apartment complex to the gym, according to press accounts, and no civilian casualties have so far been reported.

The Mexican Interagency

¶4. (S) The successful operation against ABL comes on the heels of an aggressive SEMAR effort in Monterrey against Zeta forces (ref a) and highlights its emerging role as a key player in the counternarcotics fight. SEMAR is well-trained, well-equipped, and has shown itself capable of responding quickly to actionable intelligence. Its success puts the Army (SEDENA) in the difficult position of explaining why it has been reluctant to act on good intelligence and conduct operations against high-level targets. The U.S. interagency originally provided the information to SEDENA, whose refusal to move quickly reflected a risk aversion that cost the institution a major counternarcotics victory. SEDENA did provide backup to SEMAR during the firefight with ABL forces,

but can take little credit for the operation. Public Security Secretary (SSP) Genaro Garcia Luna can also be counted as a net loser in the Mexican interagency following the ABL operation. SSP considers high-level Beltran Leyva targets to be its responsibility, and Garcia Luna has already

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said privately that the operation should have been his.

The Impact on Violence

15. (S) It is early to say with a great degree of confidence what kind of effect ABL's death will have on levels of narco-related violence in Mexico. A spike is probably likely in the short term as inter- and intra-cartel battles are intensified by the sudden leadership gap in one of the country's most important cartels. With all the Beltran Leyva brothers likely dead or in prison, there are a number of other cartel functionaries likely to vie for the leadership slot. Moreover, rival organizations may intensify efforts to expand their influence in the disarray likely to follow ABL's death. At the very least, efforts to clean the Beltran Leyva house and rout out suspected informers will be bloody, and retaliation by the organization against Mexican law enforcement or military officials is not out of the cards.

16. (C) In the medium to longer term, ABL's death could have the potential to lower the level of narco-violence rates. ABL himself was a particularly violent leader with numerous effective assassin teams. Moreover, the Sinaloa-Beltran Leyva rivalry has been responsible for a large number of narcotics-related homicides in Mexico, and also largely personally driven by the Beltran Leyva brothers themselves. Embosfs speculate that Beltran Leyva associates, under pressure and perhaps more vulnerable due to leadership deficiencies, could move to align more closely again with Sinaloa, which they might think offers a more natural protection than the Zetas.

The Boost for Calderon

17. (C) SEMAR's successful operation against ABL is a major victory for President Calderon and his war against organized crime. ABL is the highest ranking target taken down by the Calderon government, and his status as one of the most important and long-standing of Mexican drug traffickers makes his takedown even more symbolically important. President Calderon has openly admitted to having a tough year -- his party lost big in the midterm elections, he is confronting an economic crisis, and nationwide homicide rates continue to climb -- and contacts have told Poloff that he has seemed "down" in meetings. The SEMAR operation is undoubtedly a huge boost for him, both in terms of bolstering public support for his security efforts and in reassuring himself that important security accomplishments in this area are possible. Calderon's political opponents will also find it far less useful to accuse the President of hanging on to an ineffective anti-crime strategy that nets numerous mid- to low-level cartel figures but fails to rein in the major kingpins. The major Mexico City dailies have run front page Beltran Leyva stories, and President Calderon's remarks in a press conference from Copenhagen highlighting that the operation represents an "important achievement for the Mexican people and government" were widely covered.

Comment

18. (S) The operation against Arturo Beltran Leyva is a clear victory for the Mexican Government and an example of excellent USG-GOM cooperation. Seamless Embassy interagency collaboration combined with a willing, capable, and ready SEMAR produced one of the greatest successes to date in the counternarcotics fight. ABL's death will provide an

important boost to Calderon and hopefully will cultivate a greater sense of confidence within Mexican security agencies that will encourage them to take greater advantage of similar opportunities. SEMAR's win in particular may encourage SEDENA to be more proactive and less risk averse in future operations. ABL's death will certainly not resolve Mexico's drug problem, but it will likely generate the momentum necessary within the GOM security apparatus to make sustained and real progress against the country's drug trafficking organizations.

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